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Buddhists in South Vietnam

The monastic discipline of the Buddhist hierarchy in South Vietnam is generally considered to be strict and formal. The General Association of Vietnamese Buddhists in Saigon recognizes about 3,000 monks and 600 nuns as fully endowed with spiritual authority. In addition, there are about 1,000,000 novices and general lay workers.

The monks, nuns, and novices reside in monasteries. Their living, dining, and study quarters are separate. Chastity is a primary vow of both men and women. The local monastery council is empowered to defrock for violations of the primary vows against stealing, lying, killing, intoxication, and unchastity. Some Buddhists become ordained later in life and previously may have led fully secular lives, including marriage and rearing children. It is also possible to resign at any time from the Buddhist hierarchy, although this is seldom done.

Since the early 1950's the organization and control of the Buddhist hierarchy has been tightened. At the present time there is no evidence of widespread laxity in the discipline of the fully ordained Buddhist.